

**CAPSULE SUMMARY**  
**BA-1035**  
**408 Virginia Avenue**  
**East Towson, Baltimore County**  
**Circa 1885**  
**Private**

The modest vernacular dwelling, constructed circa 1885, is located at 408 Virginia Avenue in East Towson. The history of East Towson dates from the purchase of one-and-a-quarter acres of land by Daniel Harris in September 1853. This is believed to be the first documented African-American landholding in Towson, and is among the oldest such ethnic enclave in Baltimore County. Further, manumitted slaves and/or descendents of former slaves, many of who were owned by Charles Ridgely, populated the neighborhood. Hampered by the low economic status of the residents, development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was slow, increasing after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The setting of the property, building styles, and construction materials were guided by the limited economic status of the residents and their desire to establish a neighborhood of their own without the assistance of white architects, builders, and craftsmen. By 1927, the community was ninety-five percent improved with single-family dwellings, social buildings, a school, and religious structures. Many of the current homeowners and tenants living in the neighborhood are descendents of the first African-American residents.

Set on a random rubble stone foundation, the vernacular wood frame dwelling rises two stories in height. It has been reclad with asbestos shingles and the shed-roofed porch was rebuilt. Currently, the full-width front porch presents two bays across the façade and is supported by square wood posts. Alterations to the porch include a new deck and a metal balustrade. A single-leaf panel-and-light replacement door topped by a transom and a 2/2 window pierce the first story of the house. These openings are mimicked at the second story by two 2/2 windows. Architectural detailing on the façade is largely confined to the heavy molded cornice. A central interior brick chimney rises above the shed roof of the house. To the rear of the house is a circa 1940 shed.

Inventory No. BA- 1035

historic

other

street and number 408 Virginia Avenue not for publication

city, town Baltimore

**vicinity**

county Baltimore County

name	George R. Tyler
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street and number 408 Virginia Avenue

telephone	Not Available
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city, town	Baltimore
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state	MD
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zip code 21286

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.	Baltimore County Courthouse	liber	11087	folio	418
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city, town      Towson

tax map 70A

tax parcel 312

tax ID number	923505320
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- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District  
☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District  
☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register  
☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER  
☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT  
☐ Other:

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count	
_____ district	_____ public	_____ agriculture	_____ landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  X  </u> building(s)	<u>  X  </u> private	_____ commerce/trade	_____ recreation/culture	<u>      2      </u>	_____ buildings
_____ structure	_____ both	_____ defense	_____ religion	_____	_____ sites
_____ site		<u>  X  </u> domestic	_____ social	_____	_____ structures
_____ object		_____ education	_____ transportation	_____	_____ objects
		_____ funerary	_____ work in progress	<u>      2      </u>	_____ Total
		_____ government	_____ unknown		
		_____ health care	_____ vacant/not in use		
		_____ industry	_____ other:		
				<b>Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory</b>	

Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory

## 7. Description

Inventory No. BA- 1035

### Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The vernacular wood frame dwelling is set close to the road along Virginia Avenue in East Towson. Set on a random rubble stone foundation, the modest dwelling rises two stories in height. It has been reclad with asbestos shingles and the shed-roofed porch was rebuilt. Currently, the full-width front porch presents two bays across the façade and is supported by square wood posts. Alterations to the porch include a new deck and a metal balustrade. A single-leaf panel-and-light replacement door topped by a transom and a 2/2 window pierce the first story of the house. These openings are mimicked at the second story by two 2/2 windows. Architectural detailing on the façade is largely confined to the heavy molded cornice. A central interior brick chimney rises above the shed roof of the house.

To the rear of the house is a circa 1940 shed. Clad in standing seam metal, it rises one story in height and one bay in width. It is capped by a side gable roof.

## 8. Significance

Inventory No. BA-1035

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

<b>Specific dates</b>	1885 ca.	<b>Architect/Builder</b>	Unknown
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<b>Construction dates</b>	1885 ca.
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Evaluation for:

☐ National Register☐ Maryland Register☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The modest vernacular dwelling, constructed circa 1885, is located at 408 Virginia Avenue in East Towson. The history of this East Towson dates from the purchase of one-and-a-quarter acres of land by Daniel Harris in September 1853. This is believed to be the first documented African-American landholding in Towson, and is among the oldest such ethnic enclave in Baltimore County. Further, manumitted slaves and/or descendents of former slaves, many of who were owned by Charles Ridgely, populated the neighborhood. Hampered by the low economic status of the residents, development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was slow, increasing after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The setting of the property, building styles, and construction materials were guided by the limited economic status of the residents and their desire to establish a neighborhood of their own without the assistance of white architects, builders, and craftsmen. By 1927, the community was ninety-five percent improved with single-family dwellings, social buildings, a school, and religious structures. Many of the current homeowners and tenants living in the neighborhood are descendents of the first African-American residents.

East Towson as a whole is representative of an important phase of architectural development in Baltimore County, illustrating the dilution of popular architectural styles to more efficiently meet the needs of the neighborhood, and the builders' untrained abilities to execute the fashionable ornamentation. Thus, East Towson provided lower cost housing in a more suburban neighborhood, rather than the urban setting their economic status typically perpetuated.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. BA-1035

- Atlas of Baltimore County, Maryland*. Philadelphia, PA: G. M. Hopkins, 1877.  
Baltimore County Historic Inventory.  
Brooks, Neal A. and Eric G. Rockel. *A History of Baltimore County*. Towson, MD: Friends of the Towson Library, Inc., 1979.  
*Map of Baltimore County*. Philadelphia, PA: G. W. Bromley, 1915.  
Scharf, J. Thomas. *History of Baltimore City and County From the Earliest Period to the Present Day: Including Biographical Sketches of Their Representative Men*. Philadelphia, PA: Louis H. Everts, 1881. Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem, MA.  
Sidney, J. C. *Map of the City and County of Baltimore, Maryland, from Original Surveys*. Baltimore, MD: James M. Stephens, 1850.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property .10 Acre  
Acreage of historical setting Unknown  
Quadrangle name Towson

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The house is located at 408 Virginia Avenue in East Towson in the ninth District of Baltimore County. It has been historically associated with Tax Map 70A, Parcel 312 since its construction in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 11. Form Prepared by

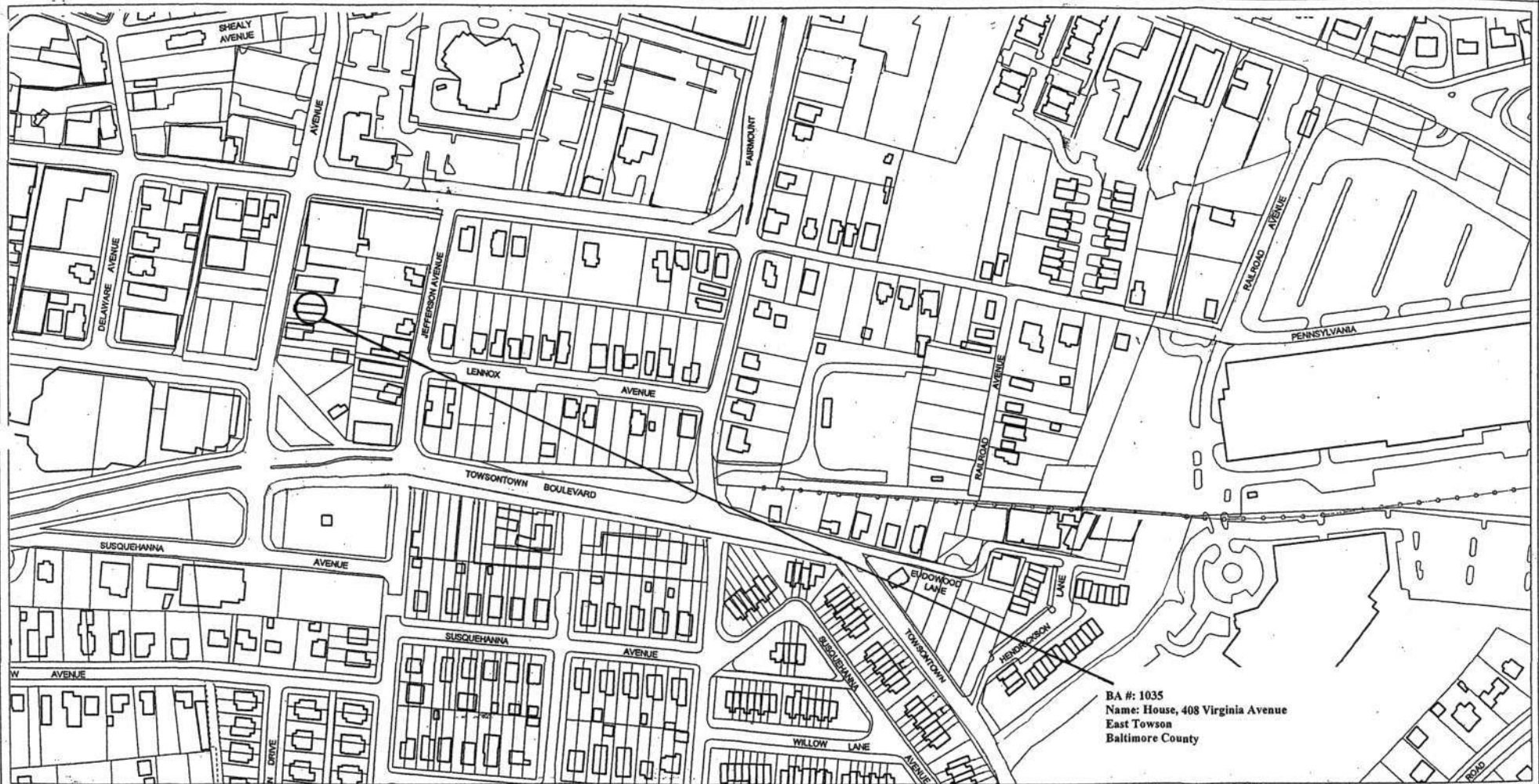
name/title	R. Weidlich and K. Baynard, Architectural Historians		
organization	EHT Tracerics, Incorporated	date	November 19, 2001
street & number	1121 5th Street NW	telephone	202.393.1199
city or town	Washington	state	DC

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust  
DHCD/DHCP  
100 Community Place  
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023  
410-514-7600

# East Towson: Planimetric Data



Prepared by:  
Baltimore County Office of Planning  
401 Bosley Avenue  
Towson, Maryland 21204  
June, 2001



Scale

1 inch = 200 feet

1:2400

100 0 100 200 Feet

Legend

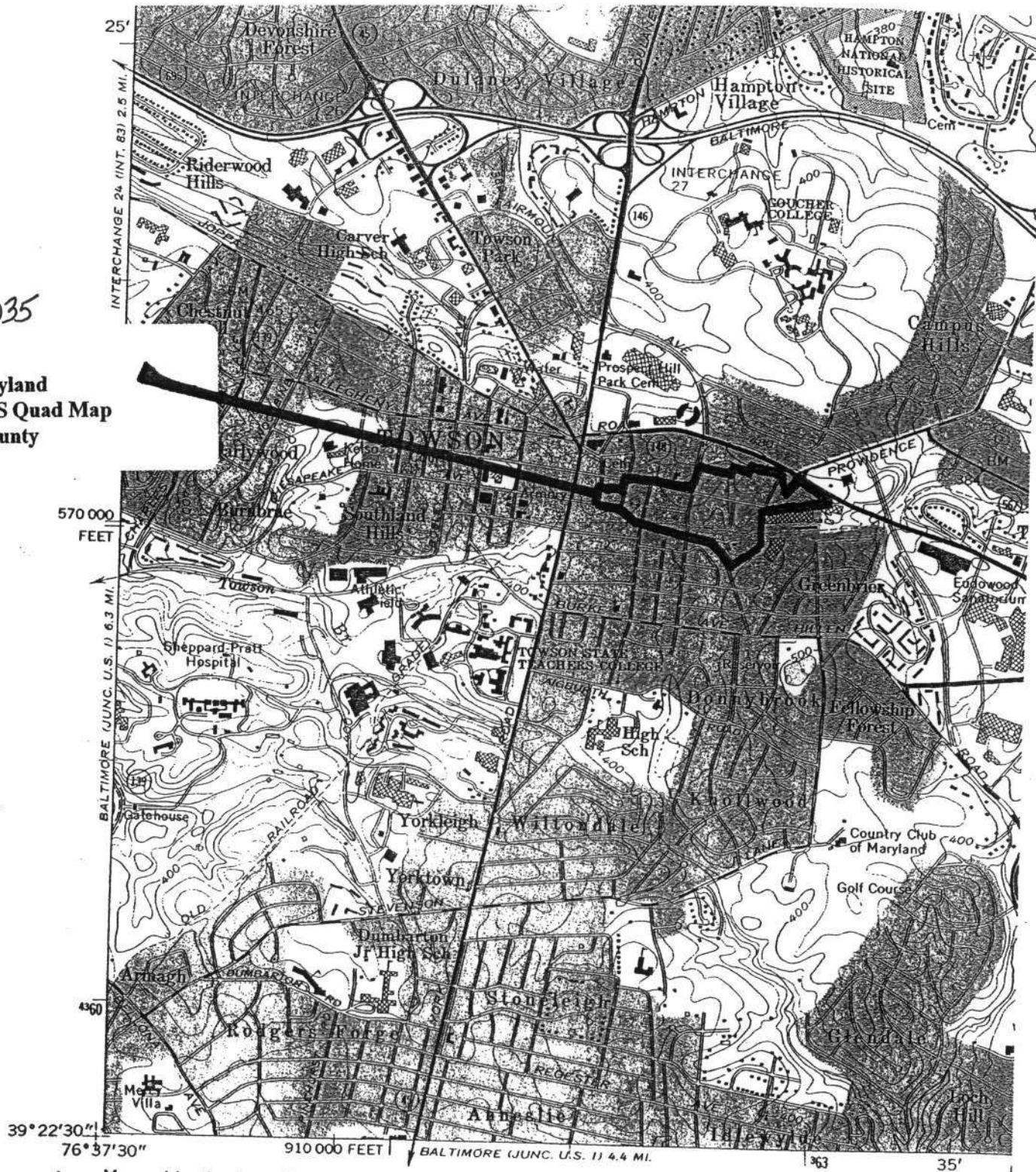
- Paved Roads
- Unpaved Roads
- Paved Parking / Driveways
- Study Area Boundary
- Hydrographic Features
- Buildings
- Vegetation

Data Sources:  
Planimetric Data: Baltimore County OIT GIS Services Unit (1:2400)  
Parcel Boundaries: Baltimore County OIT GIS Services Unit (1:2400)  
Study Area: Baltimore County Office of Planning (1:2400)  
Coordinate System:  
Maryland State Plane: NAD83/91 Horizontal Datum  
Elevations in Feet: NAVD88 Vertical Datum  
Date of Data Capture: March 1996  
Scale of Data Capture: 1" = 100'



BA-1035

East Towson  
Towson, Maryland  
Towson USGS Quad Map  
Baltimore County



(BALTIMORE WEST)  
5662' SW

Mapped by the Army Map Service  
Edited and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, USCE, and Maryland  
Bureau of Control Surveys and Maps

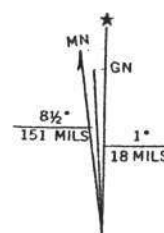
Culture and drainage in part compiled from aerial photographs  
taken 1943. Topography by planetable surveys 1944  
Culture revised by the Geological Survey 1957

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Maryland coordinate system  
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 18, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only  
landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled by the Geological Survey from  
aerial photographs taken 1966 and 1974. This information not  
field checked

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



UTM GRID AND 1974 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET





BA-1035  
408 VIRGINIA AVENUE  
BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD  
EHT TRACERIES  
10/2001  
MD SHPO  
WEST ELEVATION LOOKING SOUTHEAST  
1 OF 4



BA-1035

408 VIRGINIA AVENUE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

EHT TRACERIES

10/2001

MD SHPO

NORTHEAST CORNER LOOKING SOUTHWEST

2 OF 4



BA-1035

408 VIRGINIA AVENUE

BALTIMORE COUNTY, MD

EHT TRACERIES

10/2001

MD SHPO

NORTHWEST CORNER LOOKING SOUTHEAST

3 OF 4



## INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

THE WILLIAMS HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER 408 Virginia Ave

second

CITY, TOWN

Towson Md.

VICINITY OF

Baltimore

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

COUNTY

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☐ BUILDING(S)☒ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☐ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Gladys Williams

Telephone #: 296-5792

STREET &amp; NUMBER

408 Virginia Ave

CITY, TOWN

Towson Md. 21204

VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Baltimore County Courthouse

Liber #: 3970

Folio #: 32

STREET &amp; NUMBER

401 Bosley Ave.

CITY, TOWN

Towson Md. 21204

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

BA-1035 - 408 Virginia

c. 1908 - 1915

The roof line of this two-story frame house steps back in three descending heights. The house is four bays deep by two bays wide. A one-story porch crosses the front.

**7 DESCRIPTION****CONDITION**

☐ EXCELLENT  
☒ GOOD  
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED  
☐ RUINS  
☐ UNEXPOSED

**CHECK ONE**

☒ UNALTERED  
☐ ALTERED

**CHECK ONE**

☐ ORIGINAL SITE  
☐ MOVED      DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

408 Virginia

An unusual roof marks this house. The roof slopes from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  stories at the front to two stories at the rear. The side walls disguise this slope by dropping in three "steps" from front to rear. The "false front" is distinguished by a refined cornice.

Two  $2/2$  windows light the second floor on the facade. On the first floor, a door is located to the north while a window lights the south of the facade. The shed-roofed porch is supported by simple square posts and balustraded with modern ironwork. Three windows light each floor of the north side. The exterior window trim employs a small quirk ogee molding.

A two story addition to the south and one story porch to the north run along the east wall. The first two bays of the house have a stone foundation, while the rear rests on concrete. The house is covered with grey asbestos shingles.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**8 SIGNIFICANCE****PERIOD****AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW**

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Williams built their house around 1890, the family has lived in this house for over a century. The Williams family represent one of the oldest families living in E. Towson. Williams have been extremely active in the development of the church (African Union Methodist Church) as well as the Relief Association and various other service organizations in the E. Towson community.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE

COUNTY

STATE

COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Marcus Pollock/coordinator Merry Stinson/architect 7/77

ORGANIZATION

Committee to Save E. Towson/Towson Ymca

DATE

823-8870

STREET &amp; NUMBER

600 W. Chesapeake Ave.

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Towson Md. 21204

STATE

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RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
(301) 267-1438





BA-1035  
Williams House  
408 Virginia Ave.  
Towson, Md.  
northwest

Merry Stinson  
1977